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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to determine the effect of a self-development seminar on the learning of 27 randomly selected college freshmen as measured by grade point averages (GPA), academic units completed, and retention rate (the percentage of students returning for a second term) for one semester beginning fall 1977. Both experimental and control groups were randomly selected from 72 students volunteering for the course prior to college registration. End of semester findings indicated that experimental students achieved a mean grade point average of 2.38 compared to 1.94 for the control group. There was a significant difference in semester hours completed between groups; the experimental students earned a mean of 14.38 semester hours, while controls earned a mean of 12.48. Three times as many developmental students (18) as control (6) completed a full semester's work of 16 to 18 units. Only three experimental group members achieved less than 12 hours as opposed to 12 control group members. Twenty-six developmental and 25 control subjects re-enrolled for the spring term. Study findings were compatible with previous similar study results. (TR)

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THE EFFECT OF A SELF-DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR ON FRESHMAN LEARNING AS MEASURED BY GRADE POINT AVERAGES, UNITS COMPLETED AND RETENTION RATE

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ABSTRACT

North Greenville College had for several years printed a catalog description of a self-development seminar which had never been scheduled. At the same time, the college had suffered from a high attrition rate which demonstrated the need for special attention for many incoming freshmen.

During the fall, 1977, the writer conducted a one-semester experiment with a human potential seminar using freshmen volunteers. The investigation was carried out through an experimental design which provided by block random sampling experimental and control groups numbering twenty-seven each.

The study was designed to measure whether any differences in the mean G.P.A.s for the fall semester, the mean of the number of academic units completed by each group and the rate of retention as measured by percentage of students returning for the next semester could be attributed to the independent variable, the treatment.

A one-tailed t-test with the accepted level of significance set at .05 was used to measure the difference on the first two variables. The results indicated a significant statistical difference in the mean grade point averages of the experimental group and the control group. Since there was also a significant difference in the mean of the number of semester hours completed by each group both of the null hypotheses concerning the groups were rejected.

The mean grade point average of the E group was 2.38 on a four-point scale as compared to 1.94 for the C group. Three times as many experimental group subjects succeeded in completing a normal semester's work as defined by sixteen, seventeen or eighteen credits. There was an

observed difference of 3.7% in the number of experimental group students who returned for the next semester as compared with the control group students.

There was conclusive statistical evidence that the academic success of North Greenville College freshmen would be improved if all freshmen were given the option of participating in a human potential seminar or were required to do so. Based on the number of incoming freshmen who had originally volunteered to participate in Psychology 030, it appeared that a minimum of four sections should be provided for fall, 1978. Although no money had been budgeted for new positions, it appeared that there was basis for a budget change since the gross income realized from the retention of two extra students had amounted to $2,000. Assuming that this income would be multiplied by the offering of four sections of Psychology 030, money for the additional costs of instruction seemed to be attainable.

It was recommended that:

1. The Institutional Research Committee should continue to follow the progress of the two groups in this study.
2. The counselor or an instructor with competency in human potential work be permitted to conduct four or five seminars in fall, 1978.
3. The Development Office should attempt to secure funds to finance the human potential experience for seventy-five freshmen per year for the next three years.
4. The Curriculum Committee be asked to change the name of Psychology 030 to Psychology 131 - Human Potential Seminar.

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THE EFFECT OF A SELF-DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR ON FRESHMAN LEARNING AS MEASURED BY GRADE POINT AVERAGES, UNITS COMPLETED AND RETENTION RATE

INTRODUCTION

This study was an attempt to measure the effect of a self-development seminar on the learning of selected college freshmen as measured by grade point averages, numbers of academic units completed, and the retention rate (determined by the percentage of students returning for a second term) for one semester beginning in fall, 1977.

Since the academic year 1973-74, the catalog at North Greenville College had listed, with the Developmental Studies offerings, a course entitled Psychology 030, Developmental Seminar in Study Skills. The following course description was given: "Two one-hour sessions per week are devoted to discussions that help students to adjust to college, to understand themselves and to develop goals and ways to reach them." One semester hour of credit was offered for successful completion of the course.

No record existed of the course ever having been offered, although assistance with study skills (noticeably absent from the brief catalog description of Psychology 030) had previously been offered in a variety of ways in addition to having been an established part of both the Developmental English and Developmental Reading courses to which students were regularly assigned on the basis of low Comparative Guidance and Placement Test scores. Although the course had not been offered after having been listed in the catalog for four consecutive years, an examination of the minutes of pre-school faculty seminars for the past four years revealed persistent mention by the faculty that Psychology 030

as described in the catalog or some variation of the course was a pressing need for the college.

North Greenville, like most other junior colleges, had persistently suffered from a high attrition rate which demonstrated the need for special attention for many incoming freshmen. A discussion with the current President who had been at the college for two years had revealed that he was highly conscious of the lack of a concentrated course in goal-setting and self-understanding for freshmen. He had encouraged the implementation of such a course by the counseling center in the event that it was not offered in fall, 1977 as part of the regular schedule.

Since, according to the previous academic dean, no faculty member had been willing to teach the course on the basis that they did not feel qualified, the writer, a counselor, volunteered to conduct a one-semester experiment (in conjunction with participation in the Nova Learning Theory Module) in teaching Psychology 030 to a limited number of students. This course was not to be confused with Freshmen Orientation, a four-day introduction to college life conducted by the Student Affairs Division and required of all freshmen. Neither was it to be construed as a method of "saving" students who had low academic ability, emotional problems or predicted potential for disciplinary problems. Rather, it was designed to establish a personal link between very ordinary freshmen and the college by recognizing that each student in the class was a unique individual worthy of special attention.

A new academic dean who took office in August 1977, was immediately receptive to the idea of offering the course in the fall although he saw an inconsistency in offering three hours of institutional credit for other developmental courses which met for three hours per week while assigning only one hour of credit to Psychology 030 for which two hours of attendance

were to be required. At his request, the Curriculum Committee met just prior to the opening of the new academic year and subsequently presented to the faculty a recommendation that three hours of class work per week would be required of students enrolled in Psychology 030 with three hours of institutional credit to be offered to students who satisfactorily completed the course. The recommendation was accepted by the faculty in their opening meeting.

The writer would have preferred that the title of the course had been changed to Human Potential Seminar, but the human potential seminar concept was not a familiar one to the faculty and time constraints dictated a temporary acceptance of the course as having more substance and academic value as measured by the increased hours of academic credit.

The appropriateness of this topic for the Learning Theory module was emphasized by Rogers (1969:117) who proposed that human beings have a natural potential for learning and that "the teacher whose orientation is toward relaxing the student's potential exhibits a high degree of those attitudinal qualities which facilitate learning." The course, Psychology 030, as described in the North Greenville College catalog, had the potential for enabling individuals in the class to learn more effectively by helping them clarify their purpose in college attendance, by encouraging their desire to implement these purposes and by helping them express the deep and strong feelings which might add to or detract from a successful learning experience.

This investigation was carried out through an experimental design which provided by block random sampling and experimental group of thirty students and a control group of the same size. The size of the sample was limited by the fact that only one section of Psychology 030 was

taught in the fall semester, 1977. The writer recognized that a group of thirty students was larger than desirable for the type of assistance she had hoped to provide, but felt that the group could realistically be no smaller if any significant data was to be gathered. This problem was circumvented in part by a division of the class into three sub-groups of ten students who frequently worked as separate groups during the class. Individualized attention was accomplished through the initiation of bi-weekly journals which provided space for the student's queries and statements of problems in addition to space for the teacher's response.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

North Greenville College's slowness to recognize the need of the "new" student for special attention which had not been necessary previously was not unusual. MacMillian (1973:46) saw this reticence to embark on any variation of a human potential seminar as common while contending that the capability of providing these services already existed in every college. He described the problem of attacking the question as clearly "one of will, not means."

For at least the last decade however, there has been no doubt in the minds of the nation's educational leaders, particularly those concerned with the junior college student that today's students must be dealt with differently in many respects. Cross (1968) found the two-year college student as a national group were less confident of their academic abilities. She described them as being eager for guidance about future planning while at the same time being less flexible and less venturesome than their peers in four-year institutions.

Her theory was clearly verified in the ACE/UCLA Institutional Research Program for Fall 1976 which revealed that male two-year college students felt less well prepared than their counterparts in four-year colleges in the areas of math skills, reading and composition, foreign languages, science, history and social sciences and music and artistic skills. Perhaps most significant was the fact that only 11.2% of the male freshmen in private junior colleges (which would be comparable to North Greenville) felt that they were very well prepared in study habits in comparison to 18.2% of the freshmen in private senior colleges who felt quite secure in their study habits skills. Using local norms from the same study, only 9.9% of North Greenville freshmen felt well prepared in study habits.

The need for special academic and personal services to freshmen in an open-door college was emphasized by Moore (1970:3) who claimed that "too often the term open door is hypocritical rhetoric." He saw it as a "catch phrase" which implied that every student could enroll in college, but in no way insured his success after admission.

This concern about the revolvingness of the open door was shared by Locke (1970) who saw the large number of students who have the ability to succeed in college but fail or drop out as a concern, not only to the college, but to the nation as a whole. Rouche (1972:6) stated that:

> Almost all colleges profess open-door admissions policies. However, non-traditional students do not persist long. Therefore, philosophy and practice are at odds. The open door must be more than an admissions statement.

In Freedom to Learn (1969:104) Carl Rogers expressed a philosophy of learning which stressed a much broader perspective of the educational process than which had previously been espoused by large numbers of traditional administrators and their faculties:

> We are in my view faced with an entirely new situation in education where the goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning. The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn, the man who has learned to adapt and change, the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure.

Since learning has frequently been described as a change in the behavior of the learner, the literature is replete with references to the concept that all colleges, and especially junior colleges which attract many high risk students, be concerned with providing an environment for learning which would lead to increased independence of the student. Rouche (1972: 90-92) spoke of an eclectic or interactive theory of learning which placed more emphasis on attitudinal and positive self-concepts, while Cias (1975:33) believed that "higher education must begin

to directly address the affective development of today's students." These personal needs of the "new" students must, according to him, be addressed within the institutional setting because the personality must be fully understood if we are to try to educate the person to his fullest potential. Complementing the idea that the individual comes before the subject matter was Goble's (1970:60) description of Maslow's Third Force as "an optimistic awareness that sets man free to be man, to create and grow, and to control his choices and goals."

The importance of attitudinal and self-concept development by junior college students was highlighted in the previously mentioned ACE/UCLA study which reported that when freshmen men in private junior colleges were given the option of rating themselves as "above average" on a twenty-two trait self-rating scale they rated themselves lower than freshmen in senior colleges on every trait but defensiveness and mechanical ability. Using academic ability as a specific rating, only 32.1% of the junior college freshmen males considered themselves to be above average while 62.4% of the same type of student who had enrolled in senior college put themselves in that catagory. Again, North Greenville men rated themselves lower, with only 25.5% claiming above average academic ability.

McHolland (1971) pressed the human potential seminar approach to orienting freshmen with the claim that it would help normal, healthy students become more self-affirmitive, self-motivating and self-determining. He also believed (1972) that many students spend much valuable time struggling with the identity question of "Who Am I?"

Finally, Brewer (1969:5) wrote:

> Psychologists, educators and counselors have long been interested in identifying the factors which operate to determine the level of academic performance of students. Their interests have focused on a large number of factors, ranging from the relationship between the

> ability measures of students and academic success to the investigation of personality and temperance measures as predictors of academic performance. More recently, their interest has centered on the changing ideas in educational counseling; now the concern is the total person, not merely one aspect of his behavior.

Would the initiation of human potential seminars in a junior college affect the learning of students as measured by such standard academic measures as grade point averages and the number of units completed in a given semester? Many writers have contented that it would, but fewer studies have measured the effect. An example of the belief that the process would be effective was found in the summary of a 1971 study at Weber State College in Ogden, Utah. After dividing two hundred freshmen between traditional orientation and special counseling sessions based on a rational value decision-making model, they concluded that "It is likely that the decision-making model has had an important effect on the ability to earn higher G.P.A.s because of the long-range goals and motivation produced." Similarly, Lee in a 1975 Nova MARP designed a program for community colleges utilizing human potential seminars, cognitive mapping and career planning with the expectation that grade point averages would be raised among the treated students in addition to their attempting and completing more semester hours than the control groups.

Using a sample of freshmen at Ulster Community College Varelas (1971) compared a group who were given human potential training with a group who received traditional orientation and a group which received neither. He found no significant difference in academic achievement as measured by grade point averages. Similarly, Billups (1970:62) in dividing freshmen English students into groups which featured either group guidance techniques or indepth group counseling found the group counseling to be no more effective in terms of the academic achievement of these students.

Locke (1970) discovered that a small group counseling approach with freshmen produced higher grade point averages than those earned by untreated students, but he concluded that his sample was too small to be statistically conclusive.

A more affirmative study was made by McHolland (1971) at Kendal College who reported in a two-year follow-up of the Human Potential Group process that grades improved an average of .69% per student on a 4.0 scale. Harper (1969) as quoted by Varelis (1973) discovered that students participating in affective group counseling earned significently higher G.P.A.s, while Larsen and others (1974) proved that it was possible to raise the grade point average of disadvantaged students by placing them in special programs which emphasized the assessment of their personality traits.

Dallas (1971) while working at NAPA College to develop experimental programs to reduce the attritition rate in the Northern California Cooperative Research Project (NORCAL) hypothesized that the mean G.P.A. and the average number of units completed of the experimental group would not differ significantly from the mean G.P.A. and units completed by her two control groups. After completing a study which covered both the fall and winter quarters, she reported that the students in the experimental group whose values, goals and self-concepts were being strengthened had significantly higher G.P.A.s and had completed more academic units than the control group.

Other indications that grades could be influenced by the manner in which freshmen were treated were found in studies of potential discipline problems and the promotion of characteristics change in high-risk freshmen. Bloyer (1966) in measuring the effects of special group work with first semester freshmen male residents of five Arizona State University residence halls found a significant difference at the .05 level between the experimental group and the control group on the first semester grade point

averages. Thelan (1968) divided community college freshmen into two groups one of which was to be involved in a problem-solving process with emphasis on academic achievement and attention given to self-understanding plus the formulation or modification of goals. She discovered that the experimental group made significant gains over the two control groups when grades were used as the criterion measure.

If we accept McHolland's theory (1972:123) that "The college student is a product of a fact-centered, rote memory learning emphasis; the college student has gone to a negative, failure-oriented identity," there is much strength in the argument for a long hard look at the freshman as an individual with very special needs which he must recognize and desire to correct in order to insure academic success.

There was also considerable sentiment that freshmen in special counseling groups and human potential seminars were less likely to become discouraged and withdraw from college although again, there was an obvious need for further examination of this hypothesis.

Pedrini and Pedrini (1973:10) wrote that an extensive review of the literature pointed to the fact that college grade point averages were a major determinant of the student's desire or willingness to return for further study, a contention also held by Barrilleaux (1972) who found grades to be the best predictors of persistence at his institution. Lee's Human Potential model (1975:20) was designed to "cause the student to extend his enrollment for a longer period of time thus increasing his chance of success."

Heath and others (1973) found that they were able to reduce the attrition rate by 11% in one year at Essex County College in Newark, N.J. when counselors and faculty gave students special help in a six-factor

supportive program, while Butts (1971) discovered that 80.5% of his experimental group who had received an initial two-week program of cultural, intellectual and social orientation aimed toward retention were still enrolled in an engineering program at the end of the first year although 50% of the control group had dropped out.

Perhaps the most dramatic statement concerning the relationship between special attention to freshmen was provided by MacMillan and Kester (1973:46) who looked at the NORCAL attack on attrition after two years with the conclusion that "it is clear that the provision of special services and attention to the high risk student can cut the attrition rate in half." The necessity to work toward retention from the time of the student's enrollment is expressed by Jones (1974:2):

> To freely welcome students into community colleges without preparing them to succeed is grossly unjust. The time has come for community colleges to cease looking upon their students as typical university students. The majority of community college students are not in this category. Community colleges cannot adopt a "sink or swim" attitude toward students.

PROCEDURE

As indicated previously, the sample for this experiment was limited by the fact that only one section of Psychology 030 was to be taught initially. The number thirty was thus chosen to provide an experimental group which could be managed reasonably successfully in a non-traditional classroom situation.

In order to obtain a heterogeneous sample while at the same time giving as many freshmen as possible the opportunity to be chosen as participants, a letter explaining this experiment (see Appendix) was mailed to all freshmen who had applied for admission, paid their tuition deposit and registered for the Comparative Guidance and Placement Test by May 30, 1977. The letter was mailed to 265 applicants, all of whom were to be full-time students taking college work for the first time. Included with the letter was a return card on which the student could volunteer as a participant in the Psychology 030 group. Students were given thirty days in which to decide and return the card. The students who were contacted did not differ within statistical limits on any characteristic relevant to the experimental task. This subsequently allowed the experimentor to form random-designed groups in which the subjects were assigned randomly to different groups to receive different treatment.

Return cards from the volunteers were placed in a file box in the chronological order of their receipt. Although only sixty cards were needed for the sample, a total of seventy-two were included (the last twelve also chronologically filed) in the event that any of the subjects originally chosen failed to enroll in the fall. This was the case as subjects failed to take the C.G.P. as scheduled, did not pay their fall tuition or failed to enroll in college in August. Eventually, all seventy-two cards were used to obtain the sixty subjects needed.

After July 1, 1977, no more cards from volunteers were accumulated. The procedure then followed a block random sample model. Starting with the card numbered one, every other card (through fifty-nine) was chosen to form the experimental group. Cards numbered two through sixty were compiled as the control group. As students already chosen for either the experimental group or the control group notified the college of their intent not to enroll or did not take the C.G.P. test as scheduled their cards were removed and cards numbered sixty-one through seventy-two were divided in the same random manner to provide thirty subjects in each group by the time students registered. The thirty students chosen to participate in the experiment were notified of the choice in a letter dated July 5, 1977. Other volunteers were thanked for their interest in a letter on the same date.

If differences occurred in the average G.P.A.s for the fall semester and the average number of academic units completed by each group in that semester, these differences would be attributed to the independent variable, the treatment, which in this case would be enrollment in Psychology 030 for one semester. The treatment would also be seen as responsible for differences in another dependent variable, the rate of retention as measured by the percentage of students in each group who returned to register in the spring semester, 1978.

Data compiled on both the experimental and the control group included the following items:

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Resident or Commuter
4. Participation in Developmental Reading and/or English classes

5. Number of academic units completed
6. Fall, 1977, G.P.A.
7. Number returning in spring, 1978
8. Dates of withdrawal from college of students in either group during fall semester

Only data #5, #6, and #7 was used in this study, but the other information would be needed to provide comparisons when the findings of the study were presented to the Academic Dean and the Curriculum Committee for their consideration of the advisability on continuing Psychology 030 after one semester.

Basic Assumptions:

It was believed that students who had enrolled in Psychology 030 would differ from the control group in three ways:

1. They would receive higher grade point averages (using the mean of the group).
2. They would have completed more academic units in the first semester (again using the mean for comparison).
3. More students in the experimental group (shown as a higher percentage) would return for the second semester than would students in the control group.

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses were:

1. The mean grade point averages of the two groups did not differ significantly.
2. The mean number of semester hours completed by the two groups did not differ significantly.

$H_0: \overline{X}_1 = \overline{X}_2$

The alternate (research) hypotheses were:

1. The mean grade point averages of the two groups differed significantly.
2. The mean number of semester hours completed by the two groups differed significantly.

$H_a: \bar{X}_1 \neq \bar{X}_2$

A one-tailed t-test was used to compare both the mean G.P.A. of the two groups and the mean number of semester hours completed by each group with the level of significance being set at .05.

It was hoped that the null hypotheses would be disproved and the alternate hypotheses upheld. If the alternate hypotheses were upheld, there would have been validity in recommending to the administration that all incoming freshmen students for fall, 1978 would be given the option of participating in a human potential seminar.

Limitations of the Study:

1. Since it was necessary to form the experimental and control groups before registration in order to determine that the subjects did not differ on any significant factor, not all of the freshman class was given the opportunity to volunteer for participation in the project. The open-door policy of North Greenville College allowed students to be admitted through the registration period which lasted eight days. This meant that the Psychology 030 class would have met three times before the last registration period was over.

2. Three students in the control group did not enroll although they had completed all the admissions requirements. All of the students in the experimental group did enroll. However, two E group students decided not to register for Psychology 030 because they were unwilling to

take three hours of institutional credit instead of the one credit which was originally assigned to the course in the initial letter to the freshmen, two follow-up letters to the students chosen for the experimental group and the catalog description. There was not enough time (three days) between the faculty's decision to increase the credits and the arrival of freshmen on campus to notify the students of this change. One other student who registered for Psychology 030 was forced to withdraw before attending because of a scheduling conflict with a music course which was offered only at the same time. These changes left the experimental group with twenty-seven subjects and the control group with twenty-seven subjects at the beginning of the semester.

3. The number of subjects was too small to provide data which would be statistically conclusive.

4. There was no method of quantifying the affective aspects of the seminar which were manifested in group cohesiveness, prolonged after-class discussions, eagerness of seminar participants to participate in college activities and the frank revelation of problems and conflicts in the student journals.

5. There was no provision for a follow-up study at the end of the first and second years to determine whether the initial educational and social impetus which the students claimed to have gained in their evaluation of the course would in any way determine their future academic success in college, their continued enrollment, and/or the percentage of graduates from the experimental group as compared with the control group.

Definition of Terms:

Control (C) Group - Twenty-seven randomly-selected student volunteers who attended North Greenville during fall semester, 1977 but

were not invited to enroll in the seminar.

Experimental (E) Group - Twenty-seven student volunteers who were randomly selected to enroll in a self-development seminar for fifteen weeks during the fall semester, 1977.

Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) - The result when the number of grade points earned for all courses attempted is divided by the composite number of semester hours of work for which the student was registered.

Human Development Course - An introduction to college which is process-oriented rather than task-oriented; student-centered rather than knowledge or skill-centered, and conducted in a small group setting. Course content is based on the experiences of students rather than a previously defined body of knowledge.

Retention - The reenrollment of a freshman student for a second (subsequent) semester. In this case, the criterion was reenrollment in the spring semester, 1978.

Units Completed - The number of semester hours for which a student registered at the beginning of the term and for which he received a letter grade at the end of the semester. This number would have been reduced by any withdrawals (W, WP or WF) and by the receipt of an FA grade (failure due to absences) or an I grade (incomplete).

RESULTS

At the end of the fall semester, 1977 the grade point averages for students in the experimental and control groups were recorded and means for each group were established. The results of a one-tailed t-test using .05 as the accepted level of significance revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean grade point averages of the experimental group and the control group for the first semester of their attendance. Since $M_1 > M_2$, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 1 below summarized the results of the comparison of grade point averages. Seven E group students attained a G.P.A. higher than 3.0 as compared to one student in the C group. Fewer students in the control group (twelve) earned grade point averages between 2.0 and 3.0 than did those in the experimental group (thirteen). Grade point averages between 1.0 and 2.0 were earned by twice as many control subjects as experimental subjects. That difference remained constant in the range of grade points below 1.0.

TABLE 1

Grade Point Averages Earned During Fall 1977

G.P.A.	Experimental N=27	Control N-27
3.4-4.0	2	0
3.0-3.5	5	1
2.5-3.0	5	4
2.0-2.5	8	8
1.5-2.0	4	8
1.0-1.5	1	2
Below 1.0	2	4
	Mean = 2.38 Standard Deviation = .8440 Variance = .7124	Mean = 1.94 Standard Deviation = .7814 Variance = .6106

A significant difference in the number of semester hours completed by each group was also revealed by the use of a one-tailed t-test using .05 as the acceptable level of significance. Since $M_1 > M_2$, the second null hypothesis was rejected.

As indicated by Table 2, below, a mean of 14.38 semester hours was earned by the experimental group as compared with a mean of 12.48 hours earned by the control group.

TABLE 2

Number of Semester Hours Completed During Fall 1977

Number of Hours	Experimental N=27	Control N=27
18	2	0
17	6	3
16	10	3
15	2	3
14	1	3
13	1	6
12	2	2
Below 12	3	7
	Mean = 14.93 Standard Deviation = 3.3547 Variance =11.2538	Mean = 12.48 Standard Deviation = 4.5491 Variance =20.6941

Experimental subjects completed between zero and eighteen semester hours while control group subjects completed between zero and seventeen semester hours. Eighteen experimental group students succeeded in completing a normal semester's work as defined by sixteen, seventeen or eighteen hours

of course work. This was three times as many as the number of students in the control group who completed a full semester of work. At the other end of the semester-hours-completed scale, three members of the experimental group earned below twelve semester hours as compared with seven control group subjects who fit into that category.

Students returning for the spring semester, 1978, were indicated in Table 3. Twenty-six of the twenty-seven seminar students returned (92.6%) and twenty-five of the control group students (88.9%) reenrolled. There was an observed difference of 3.7% more returnees from the experimental group.

TABLE 3

Students Returning For Spring 1978

Experimental		Control	
N	%	N	%
26	(92.6)	24	(88.9)

Difference = 3.7%

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study were compatible with several previous studies of a similar nature in which the samples were very small and the time period during which the variables were measured was limited to one semester. This short-term measurement of a new freshman's progress was usually described as inadequate for conclusive evidence by the other investigators.

There was a significant statistical difference in grade point averages and number of hours completed between the experimental and control

groups in the current study. Since a student must earn a 2.0 or better to receive a degree from North Greenville College and would be placed on academic probation if he earned less than 1.5 when at least twelve hours of work had been attempted, it would appear to be desirable that a student earn above 1.50 in the first semester. Also, in light of the fact that two consecutive semesters of academic probation would result in the loss of a large portion of the student's financial aid, the maintenance of an initially high G.P.A. would gain added importance. In this case, twice as many (four) students in the control group were placed on academic probation as were students in the experimental group (two).

Since a student in a junior college operating under the semester system should earn between fifteen and eighteen hours per semester in order to avoid overloading during one or more semesters and/or attending a summer session in order to graduate at the end of two academic years, eighteen members (66.7%) of the control group were already out of semester sequence at the end of the fall semester as compared with seven (25.9%) experimental group subjects. An examination of the records indicated that the difference was due to a larger number of failures by control group subjects. The small number of failures earned by the experimental group could most likely be attributed to the fact that students in the seminar were referred to peer tutors at mid-term when D and F grades were earned after eight weeks of work.

The first semester retention rates of 92.6% for the E group and 88.9% for the C group were very high for North Greenville, but the small loss of students from both groups most likely stemmed from the fact that all fifty-four students had originally volunteered to be part of the seminar group, thus indicating a special interest in succeeding during

the first semester. The writer later saw the value of having had groups designated C1 and C2 with the second of these groups consisting of students who had shown no particular interest in improving their study habits or receiving special help with the problems common to beginning students.

There was conclusive statistical evidence that the academic success of North Greenville College freshmen would be improved if all freshmen were given the option of participating in a human potential seminar or were required to do so. Since the size and training of the current staff would not support such an endeavor it would have been necessary to employ an additional instructor with competency in human potential seminar work or to employ an additional counselor so that the writer would be free to conduct the seminars. Based on the number of incoming freshmen who had originally volunteered to participate in Psychology 030 during fall, 1977, it appeared that a minimum of four sections should be provided for fall, 1978.

According to the President, the proposed academic budget for 1978-79, in light of a very stable but non-rising enrollment pattern, made no provision for new faculty or student personnel staff positions. The results of this study suggest a basis for recommending a change in the budget since the gross income realized from the retention of just two extra students was more than $2,000.

It could be reasonably speculated that this extra income would be multiplied by offering four sections of Psychology 030 instead of one with the result that income from students retained for a second semester could be used to pay for the additional costs of instruction. A recommendation to the Curriculum Committee that Psychology 030 be offered to a larger number of students in fall, 1978 would appear to have a chance of acceptance based on the data gathered for this study.

It had been the conviction of the writer that the concept should not be allowed to die after such a short-lived trial. The 1977 graduating class of North Greenville College represented only 26.98% of the full-time freshmen (252) who entered in fall, 1975. Adding the estimated cost of recruiting each student to the amount of state and federal aid awarded to the class of 1977 during their four semesters of attendance, a total of $374,000 was invested in their potential for completion of the degree. A similarly large expenditure of funds from many sources was repeated every two years with approximately the same attrition rate occurring. If for no other reason than financial loss, there would appear to be an unmistakable need to make a definite move toward establishing a higher retention rate. The human potential seminar plan could be worth a trial, especially since the student paid the college for three semesters of work which would make the cost of the seminars little if any more of a financial liability than the approximately $190.00 which was spent to recruit each freshman.

In an effort to keep the concept viable while further research was conducted, particularly in the area of costs, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Institutional Research Committee of the faculty should follow the progress of the two groups under consideration in this study with special attention to the retention rate over a two-year period.

2. The counselor or an instructor with competency in human potential work be permitted to conduct four or five seminars next year with the aim of publicizing the opportunity and improving the process.

3. The Development Office should make an effort to secure from outside sources (grant or private gift) the funds needed to finance the human potential experience for seventy-five freshmen per year during

a three year period beginning in fall, 1979.

4. The Curriculum Committee of the faculty be asked to change the name of Psychology 030 to Psychology 131 - Human Potential Seminar, thus providing for transfer of the credits to other institutions which offer a similar course. The review of the literature indicated that human potential seminars are being offered in an increasing number of colleges and universities, thus making the probability of the credits transferring more likely in the future.

The projected nation-wide intensified competition for students dramatically emphasizes the need for special attention to the factors which encourage a higher rate of retention. North Greenville as a small, private institution which is highly tuition-dependent cannot successfully, over an extended period of time, absorb the increased costs of recruiting and instruction without a greater rate of return in the form of graduates. The initiation of a human potential seminar program could conceivably be an important factor in the academic success of future students.

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APPENDIX

NORTH GREENVILLE COLLEGE • TIGERVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA 29688 • (803) 895-1410

Director of Counseling and Placement

May 30, 1977

Dear

We are looking forward to having you as one of our students in 1977-78 and are very anxious that you should have a happy and successful educational experience. We certainly don't want you to become just a statistic at North Greenville!

As you know, success in college depends on the student's social and emotional development as well as his academic ability. There is no doubt that many students fail to graduate because they never "got it all together" rather than because they couldn't do the work.

In an effort to help our incoming freshmen off to a very firm beginning, I am looking for volunteers for a project which will take a little of the student's time while hopefully offering much assistance with problems which are bound to arise. I wanted you to be among the first group to be given the opportunity to volunteer.

What we are offering is an exciting Self-Development Seminar which will be called Psy. 030. Covering a wide area from study habits to personal problems and career choices, the course will require one hour and forty minutes per week of your time, during the fall semester only. For this effort, you will receive the special help and one college (semester hour) credit. This credit can be taken as part of your regular course load or can be added on if you have already decided on the courses which you want to take.

I think that you will enjoy getting to know the other students better while helping yourself with the big job of being a member of the college community. Please think very carefully about the idea since the program is for first-time freshmen only. If you are interested, please return the enclosed card with your signature by June 30th.

We hope to hear from you soon. In the meantime, have a fine summer.

Sincerely,

Jane H. Silver

JHS:ml

An Institution of the S.C.B.C.